

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing in a set top box connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising:

a software program application which enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module contained within said software program application which queries said e-mail server to determine whether any e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria is among a plurality of e-mails for the user that have ~~has~~ arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module also contained within said software program application,

wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.

2. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is permanent, so that said software program application continually queries said e-mail server.

3. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

the connection between said set top box and said e-mail server is non-permanent, so that said software program application queries said e-mail server at specific timed intervals.

4. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box contains a multi-tasking Operating System and said software program application runs on top of said Operating System.

5. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said set top box contains a single-tasking Operating System and said software program application remains in memory as a Terminate and Stay Resident program and runs intermittently at user-configurable intervals.

6. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for notifying the user of the existence of e-mail messages fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria through said notification icon on the television screen.

7. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said notification icon is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the e-mail filter criteria.

8. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for notifying the user through the use of a tone generated through the television speaker.

9. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 8, wherein

said tone is configurable by the user, and reflects the content of the e-mail filter criteria.

10. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein

said notifying means notifies the user of a plurality of said e-mail messages wherein each e-mail message satisfies different filter criteria and has a different user notification icon.

11. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein

said software program application further includes means for querying said e-mail server upon power-up of said set top box, and immediately notifies the user of the existence of any e-mail messages satisfying the user-specified e-mail filter criteria.

12. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
said software program application notifies the user via a pager rather than through
said set top box.

13. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
said software program application notifies the user of the existence of a telephone
call with Caller ID satisfying said e-mail filter criteria, instead of an e-mail message.

14. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
said software program application notifies the user of another user attempting to
make Instant Message contact with the user.

15. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
newer versions of said software program application are downloaded to said set top
box by said Internet provider.

16. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 15, wherein
said downloading of newer versions can distinguish between different types of set top
boxes, and make adjustments to the content of said download accordingly.

17. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
said software program application is not resident on said set top box, but is resident
on said e-mail server.

18. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein
said set top box is connected to said e-mail server through a middle server, where
said software program application is resident on said middle server.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) An e-mail filtering and notification apparatus, comprising:
set top box, connected between a TV content provider, an Internet provider having an
e-mail server, and a TV;

user-input means for allowing a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon;

retaining and storing means for retaining and storing said criteria and said notification icon;

querying means, for querying said e-mail server to determine whether any e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria is among a plurality of e-mails for the user that have ~~has~~ arrived at said e-mail server; and

notification means for notifying the user of said arrival by posting said notification icon to the Set Top Box,

wherein said notification icon relates to the subject matter of said arriving e-mail.

21. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium for filtering electronic mail and notifying a user, residing on a set top box connected between a television content provider, an Internet provider having an e-mail server, and a television, comprising:

a software program application that enables a user to specify e-mail filter criteria and a notification icon which then retains and stores said e-mail filter criteria and said notification icon;

a querying module that queries said e-mail server to determine whether any e-mail fulfilling said e-mail filter criteria is among a plurality of e-mails for the user that have ~~has~~ arrived at said e-mail server; and

a notifying module wherein, upon arrival of an e-mail fulfilling said criteria, said software program application notifies the user by posting said notification icon to the set top box.